

**Town of Westford
Finance Committee Meeting
Millennium School
January 28, 2008**

Present: Dave Murray, Kelly Ross, Rose O'Donnell, Ingrid Nilsson, Tom Price, Jeanne Drula, Michael Princi, Al Herget, Alicia Corvino, Suzanne Marchand

Absent: None

7:30 PM Call to Order

Discussion – Budget Status

Marchand led the discussion by saying that a balanced budget is very possible. New State Aid is projected at \$800,000. Marchand did not include the possible \$232,000 of gaming revenues in her projection since we cannot count on it. Most Town departments will be at Fiscal Year 2008 level service or less. Westford Public Schools need a 3.3% increase over Fiscal Year 2008 to have a level service budget. In Marchand's projection, Westford Public Schools will only get a 3.0% increase.

There have been talks amongst the Selectmen to only fill vacant positions that are absolutely necessary. There have also been talks about freezing all unnecessary expenses. The Town Manager will have to sign off on a purchase order for any expense incurred.

Other sources of revenue may be the JPI and Cornerstone development projects. Money will be raised for the town through various building permits and also in future growth in the outlying years.

The raises for the WPWA and OPEIU union's are currently budgeted in the compensation reserve.

O'Donnell asked if there was anyway to fix the health insurance problem through negotiations. Marchand stated that the problem needs to be corrected at the State level. The benefits are institutionalized and would not change through arbitration.

The Fiscal Year 2009 budget does not make any assumptions on the Town Hall.

There have been no projections as of yet for the continued testing of the Abbot Oil Spill. However, the money can be raised in Fiscal Year 2009 through emergency funds.

The Snow and Ice projection for Fiscal Year 2009 has been changed to \$600,000 from \$300,000.

Khumalo will present his budget on Thursday, February 7th at the Millennium School at 7:30 P.M. The budget presentations by the department heads will take place on Saturday, February 16th at the Millennium School.

Marchand mentioned that it may be a good idea to defer the allocation of capital until the Fall Special Town Meeting. It would give the Town time to talk with the Community Preservation Committee to possibly fund certain projects. Deferring the capital will also provide the Town time to take a fixed asset inventory for every department. However, in some instances, the capital should not be deferred. Marchand and the Finance Committee cited several instances where the purchase of capital should not be delayed. The Fire Department has grant money for Fiscal Year 2009 to purchase self contained breathing apparatuses. About ninety percent of the cost of the apparatuses is being funded through a grant. Also, it was noted that the Technology Department usually buys computers at a discount before the school year starts. If the Town waits, the computers will end up costing more.

It was suggested for the budget session that the Selectmen and Finance Committee only hear the presentations from those departments that they have questions on their budgets.

Discussion – Town Hall Update

Murray gave a brief update on the Town Hall situation. He said that one option for the Town is to buy the building at 515 Groton Road for \$4,000,000. The building currently has a tenant with two years left on their lease at \$160,000 per year. Marchand estimates that the building will cost \$370,000 per year for twenty years. The question still remains as to where the money to purchase the building will come from.

Another suggestion was to refurbish part of the Town Hall and have some employees move back in. Remaining employees will be moved to the Millennium School.

Discussion – Finance Committee Report

Ross stated that he will help the person that takes over the drafting of the Finance Committee report. It is best to have one person take charge of the operation. Nilsson and Princi both volunteered. The week before printing the report requires a large time commitment.

Finance Committee Town Report Draft

Ross motioned to approve the Finance Committee Town Report Draft. Corvino seconded the motion which was approved unanimously, 9-0.

Minutes

A motion was made by O'Donnell to approve the minutes of December 17, 2007. The motion was seconded by Price and approved unanimously, 5-0. Drula, Princi, Herget, and Corvino abstained.

A motion was made by Princi to approve payment in the amount of \$110.00 to Dan O'Donnell for drafting the minutes of the Finance Committee Meetings. The motion was seconded by Nilsson and approved unanimously, 9-0.

Discussion – Representative Town Meeting

Murray gave a brief overview of a meeting he attended about a Representative Town Meeting style of government. Murray said that he felt it would not impact the Finance Committee regardless of what type of government is in place. The meeting did provide Murray with three suggestions regarding the Finance Committee. They are:

1. Send out a similar Finance Committee Report for the Fall Special Town Meeting.
2. Take positions on all articles at Town Meeting. Do not take positions on just the financial articles.
3. Give a financial presentation before Town Meeting.

Future Meeting Dates

O'Donnell motioned to invite the Selectmen to a Finance Committee meeting after the February 16, 2008 department head presentations. Princi seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously, 9-0.

Future Finance Committee meetings are scheduled for Thursday, February 7th, 2008, Saturday, February 16th, 2008, and Wednesday, February 27, 2008 at the Millennium School.

Adjourn

9:30 – Drula motioned to adjourn. Herget seconded the motion which was approved unanimously, 9-0.

Reserve Fund Balance FY08: \$107,510.25

Signed, Dave Murray
Finance Committee Chairman

Date